

August 9, 2010

Dear Parents,

Welcome to a new school year! I am very excited about all the things the students will learn and be exposed to this year. Third grade is a challenging year for some students. The curriculum is more demanding, more testing, and many new concepts to learn. In order to make this transition smooth, I need your help.

The first two weeks will be spent getting to know your child and his/her interests and learning style. This information will help me select the best assessment tools to reflect what he/she has learned. Attached is a form for you to complete and return to school by Friday, August 13, 2010. This is simply a questionnaire about your child. Please be as candid as possible in the "Additional Things You Should Know About My Third Grader" section. The information gathered will help your child. The students will be given a similar form to complete in class titled "All About Me." I will combine the information from both forms, as well as, performance on previous standardized tests and report cards, and research the best teaching practices for each student. Once this is established, I will begin the assessment process. Many approaches will be used to monitor student mastery and progress. Formative assessments provide the information I need to adjust teaching to suite the students (pop quizzes, classwork, homework, etc.). Summative assessments give a bigger picture of what skills and concepts the student has grasped over a period of time (standardized tests, chapter tests, etc.). I will use the teaching practice most appropriate for your child. I am more interested in what he/she has learned than how the material was learned. I will do what needs to be done to help each student meet and exceed the standards for third grade.

Portfolios will be kept on each student. Work samples from each week and each subject area will be placed in the portfolios to show performance over a period of time. The students will help me select the samples each week. If he/she did not perform well that week, the student and I will talk about what went wrong and devise a plan of action for the following week. One-on-one attention will be given if necessary. It is important for the students to see their progress and help develop ways to improve. Portfolios will be used in parent-teacher-student conferences as a point of reference. I like for students to be involved in the complete learning process; therefore, they should be apart of the conferences.

Weekly tests and quizzes will be given to assess student comprehension of the concepts taught during the week. Grades of 70% or lower qualify for a retest. Retests are done on Fridays of each week. "Pop quizzes" are given at random to ensure students are paying attention and understand what was discussed in class. This also helps me determine the discussion for the next day. If the students do not do well on the pop quiz, I will revisit the information the next day using a different

approach. All graded materials will be sent home in the student's homework folder. The left pocket is for graded assignments, tests, quizzes, and any communication FROM ME TO YOU. Please include any communication TO ME in this pocket. The right pocket is for homework. The students should complete homework assignments, place them in the right pocket, then return the folder daily to the tray marked "Homework" on the shelf by the door. In addition to completing homework assignments, returning homework daily will be apart of the homework grade. Homework is assigned 4 nights per week. Each student is given a Homework Sheet on Mondays. This outlines all homework assignments and the testing schedule for the week. Class happenings and reminders are also listed. At the bottom is a section for "Parental Praise." Please take a few moments each week to write a few words of encouragement to your child. Having our support can make a world of difference in student performance. The sheet should be kept at home in a central location so that you and your child can stay abreast and on target.

The students will be taking the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) in this year. It will be administered two weeks before Spring Break. This test measures what each child has learned and if he/she is meeting the state standards. The test also provides an individual student profile to identify areas of strength and weakness. Placement for 4th grade is also determined. I suggest purchasing a test prep book (3rd grade) from The School Box. There is a whole section devoted to standardized test prep materials. I like all of the Spectrum books. As I get to know your learner, I will develop a blueprint for testing success. I will share this information with you in a conference several months before testing begins. It is never too soon to start preparing for state assessments. Please pay close attention to the areas you know are more challenging for your child.

I am always available for conferences. I can be reached at (770) 322-6370 from 7:00-7:45 a.m. and 2:45-4:00 p.m. You can contact me anytime at clthornton@bellsouth.net. I check my emails daily. Thank you in advance for your support. I look forward to working with you and your child.

Sincerely,

Ms. C. L.